

Rapid To-Dos

With Annie Brabazon & Kat Redniss



Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award Conference

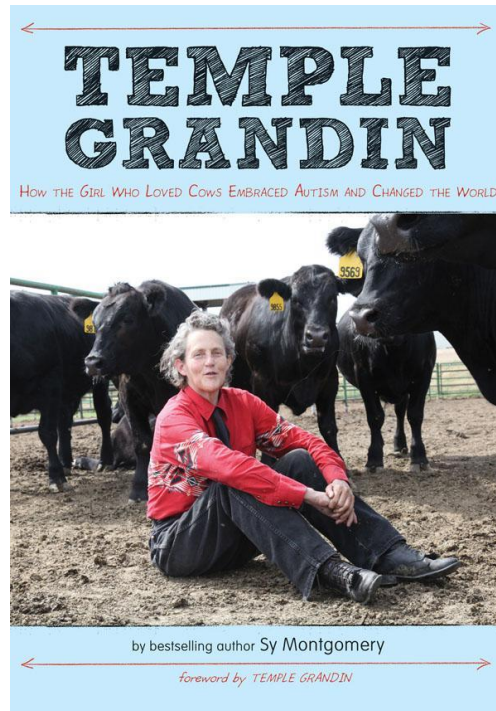
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Temple Grandin: How the Girl who loved Cows Embraced Autism and Changed the World

by Sy Montgomery (grade 5 and up)
Houghton Mifflin, 2012.



Warm Up: *Thinking in Pictures*: Temple explains how she thinks in pictures and not words. Prepare a list of everyday words and in partners or in small groups describe the images that come to mind with each word.

Writing or Arts activity:

Doors: Sy Montgomery writes about the significance of doors to Temple, “Doors became important symbols for her, marking her many difficult passages and giving her the courage to go forward into new and unknown territory.” Doors represented opportunities, courage, rejection, confidence and moving forward.

Create a door that represents important moments in your life where you took a risk, overcame an obstacle or challenge, made a change in your life, faced a fear.

or

Take photographs of important doors in your life. Describe what they represent to you and how they have helped you get through important events in your life.

or

Write about the important symbolic doors you have passed through in your life. Maybe it was the door into middle school or to a new school, maybe it was a door to trying something new and different, maybe it was a door to overcoming a hardship or difficult time in your life. Describe what you learned

Debate/Discussion/Research:

Vegetarianism: Temple Grandin said, “If I had my druthers people would have evolved as plant-eaters and wouldn’t kill animals for food at all. But I don’t see the whole human race converting to vegetarianism any time soon.” By choosing not to eat meat or animal products, a vegetarian or vegan saves thousands of animals from slaughter over the course of his or her lifetime.” Temple also notes that “if all use of animals for food—including laying hens and milking cows—were eliminated organic agriculture wouldn’t work, because manure from animals is an essential part of this method of farming.”

Research the pro’s and con’s of meat eating and vegetarianism and stage a debate.

Agriculture/Law/Ethics: Temple believes that food animals deserved a life free from fear and in sync with the animal’s natural behaviors and needs. Temple also believes that food animals deserve a dignified death free of pain and fear. Have students research factory farms and some aspect of raising food animals. Examine the laws in place in Vermont to learn how we are regulating farming practices related to food animals.

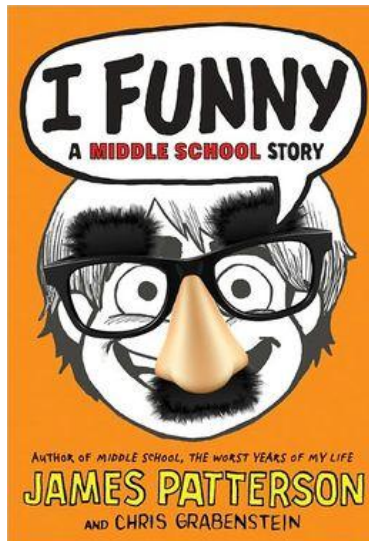
Visit these sites for more information:

<http://www.aspca.org/fight-animal-cruelty/farm-animal-cruelty/> ASPCA Farm Animal Cruelty

[American Humane Society](#)

I Funny

by James Patterson and Chris Grabenstein
(grade 5 and up)



Warm Up activity: What's my Punchline? Write jokes without the punchlines on index cards and put a few on tables or hand out one to each kid. Ask them to try and guess the punchline. (See jokes at the end of this write-up)

Discussion Ideas:

Jamie sometimes encountered moments where his reality of being in a wheelchair changed the way he experienced things, "walking home from school" and "stand up comedy" for example. Jamie still did these things, but in a different way. Have kids brainstorm ways we can adapt everyday activities to be sure they include kids of all abilities. Have them imagine how their day might change if they had to do all they do in a wheelchair.

Differently abled versus Ordinarily abled: Are these good labels? Is differently abled like having a superpower? Why or why not?

The casualties of comedy: After winning a stand-up competition Jamie has an important realization about comedy, "Suddenly, I understand what I just did. Remember how I said comedy was a great weapon to use against bullies? Well it turns out it's a weapon so powerful that if you're not careful, it can also seriously injure the people you are closest to."

How can you tell the difference between light-hearted and good natured jokes versus mean spirited, hurtful jokes.

Public Speaking/Writing:

Stand Up Comedy Contest: Give kids a theme, an object, a subject in school, or an aspect of their lives and have them create a 3-4 minute stand up comedy routine. Use Jamie's jokes as well as the sites listed as resources for jokes. In preparation evaluate what makes a good stand up comedy routine: Timing, material, relevance etc.

Make this event a community one by inviting the public, charging admission and donating the proceeds to local or state organizations in Vermont that help kids with significant medical conditions.

Some suggestions:

Travis Roy Foundation: www.travisroyfoundation.org/

Vermont Children's Hospital at Fletcher Allen Health Care:

<http://www.fletcherallen.org/services/children/>

Websites to find jokes for kids:

kids.yahoo.com/jokes

bconnex.net/=kidworld/weekjoke.htm

ahajokes.com/kids_jokes.html

jokesbykids.com

kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/jokes/jokes_galore.htm

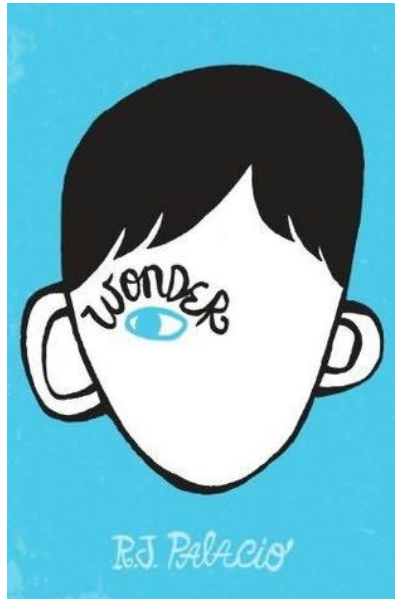
ducksters.com/jokesforkids

What did Mars say to Saturn?	Give me a ring sometime
What is black and white and black and white and black and white?	A nun in a revolving door.
Why did the refrigerator hum?	Because it forgot the words to the song.
What would you get if cross a vampire with a teacher?	Lots of blood tests.
What kind of foods do math teachers eat?	Square meals
Who invented fractions?	Henry the 1/8th
Why did the cookie go to the doctor?	Because it was feeling crummy.
What did the duck say when he bought lipstick?	Put it on my bill

Why did the turtle cross the road?	To get to the shell station.
What did the egg say to the other egg?	Let's Get Cracking!
What do you say to a cow that crosses in front of your car?	Mooo-ve Over.
Why did the parrot wear a raincoat?	So he could be polyunsaturated.
How much does a pirate pay for his earrings?	A buccaneer
What works only when it's fired?	A rocket
What is a burglar's favorite instrument?	A steel drum.
When do you give a sword a test?	When it is at its sharpest.

What do you call a very popular perfume?	A best-smeller.
Why can't you play jokes on snakes?	Because you can never pull their legs.
What did the frog say when he returned his library books?	Read it! Read it! Read it!
Why do golfers take an extra pair of socks?	In case they get a hole in one.

Wonder
(grade 5 and up)
by R.J. Palacio



Livebinder link with lesson activities, discussion questions and a reading guide for every chapter. <http://www.livebinders.com/play/play/501227>

Writing/Art

Mr. Browne, Auggie's English teacher gives the class a monthly precept. Precepts are anything that helps guides us when making decisions about really important things, rules to live by in a way. Choose one of Mr. Browne's precepts or come up with one of your own and write about what this precept means, why you like it, examples of how it helps you when making decisions about important things and examples of characters in the story living by this precept.

Mr. Browne's Precepts: (rules to live by)

1. "When given the choice between being right or being kind, choose kind." —Dr. Wayne Dyer
2. "Your deeds are your monuments." —Inscription on ancient Egyptian tomb
3. "Have no friends not equal to yourself." —Confucius
4. "Fortune favors the bold." —Virgil
5. "No man is an island, entire of itself." —John Donne
6. "It is better to know some of the questions than all of the answers." —James Thurber
7. "Kind words do not cost much. Yet they accomplish much." —Blaise Pascal
8. "What is beautiful is good, and who is good will soon be beautiful." —Sappho

9. "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can." —John Wesley
10. "Just follow the day and reach for the sun." —The Polyphonic Spree
11. "Everyone deserves a standing ovation because we all overcometh the world." —Auggie Pullman

Song Lyrics:

Many of the chapters begin with lyrics from popular songs. Choose song lyrics that capture the essence of other characters in the book.

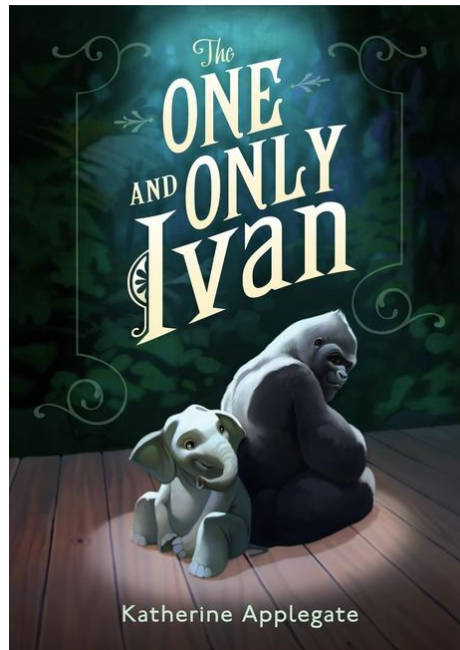
"Kinder than is necessary..."

At graduation, Mr. Tushman quotes J.M. Barrie's book, *The Little White Bird*, "Shall we make a new rule, always try to be a little kinder than is necessary." Have students begin a kindness campaign, pledging to find moments where you can spread kindness in your community. Students can keep a journal about what acts of kindness they performed, how it felt, and the perceived impact.

The One and Only Ivan

(grade 4 and up)

by Katherine Applegate



Creative Writing/Read Alouds: Have students create a story about an unlikely friendship between two animals and give the animals in their story voice just like Katherine Applegate gave voice to Ivan, Stella, Ruby and Bob. Some books that illustrate this are:

The Underneath by Kathy Appelt

Waiting for the Magic by Patricia MacLachlan

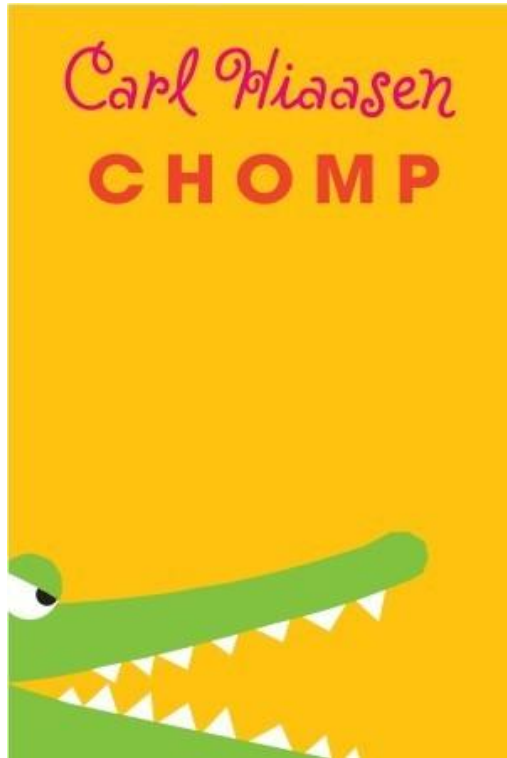
Unlikely Friendships: 47 Remarkable Stories from the Animal Kingdom by Jennifer S.

Holland is a collection of wonderful short stories about unusual animal friendships. You could select a few for students to read or to read aloud to them.

Research Animals in Captivity: Ivan and Ruby were transferred from a shopping mall glass enclosure to a zoo where they were reunited with animals of their own species. Still zoos are controversial because wild animals are kept in captivity instead of in their natural environments, yet zoos allow people to learn about wild animals and help to protect endangered species. Research both sides of this issue and create ad campaigns reflecting your opinion on the issue.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FF1oWHL-lSs>

Chomp
(grade 5 and up)
by Carl Hiaasen



Writing: Survival is a theme throughout Chomp. Wahoo and his family are trying to survive some financial uncertainty, Derek Badger is literally trying to survive in the everglades, and Tuna is trying to survive life with an alcoholic and abusive father. People have been known to go to do all kinds of things to survive and that includes things they would not ordinarily do. Write about something you had or still have to survive (middle school, braces, a family vacation, the loss of someone important). Describe what makes it challenging and what sort of things you did or hope to do to survive.

Drama/Video/Technology:

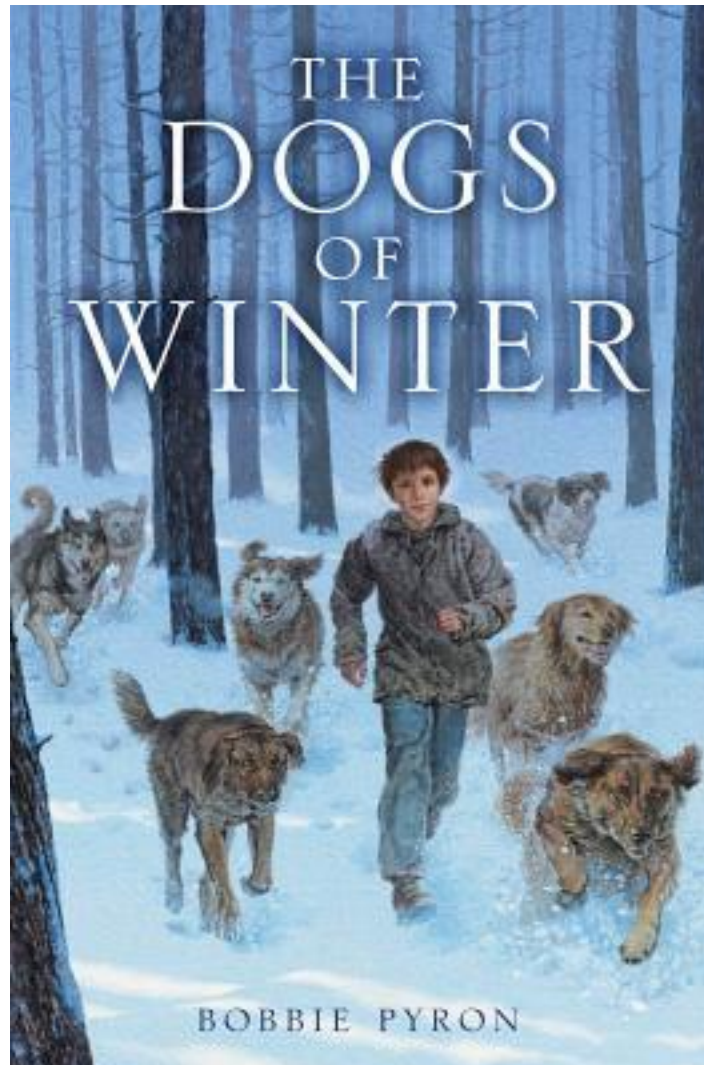
Reality TV spoof: It seems almost any aspect of life is fodder for reality TV. Could Surviving Middle School be the next big reality TV hit? Create scripts and maybe even a video trailer promoting an episode of your reality show!

Taxonomy Game: Wahoo's friend Tuna knows all the scientific names of animals. "She explained that the study was called Taxonomy, which classified all living things into categories based on traits and common ancestors. The first part of the scientific name identified the genus and the last part was the species. Create a game where to match the scientific name with the common name of animals in their region.

The Dogs of Winter

(grade 6 and up)

by Bobbie Pyron



Research/Social Issues: Research and compare homelessness among youth in our country versus Russia. Compare the causes and consequences of homelessness and the programs and services available to help kids.

Discussion: Family: For Ivan the word family takes on a new meaning as he comes to consider the dogs his family.

Before reading the book brainstorm ideas about what makes a family. Once you've finished the book go back to the list. Do you agree or disagree that the dogs became Ivan's family?

May B

by Caroline Starr Rose



Poetry:

May tells her story through sparse but powerful verse. Read the example below with students and have them identify what May seems to be feeling. Discuss how they know even though she never really speaks directly about her emotions. Then have readers write a short piece of poetry describing a place, and in their description, ask them to convey an emotional relationship to the moment and environment.

Example:

The air inside is heavy
With heat,
With darkness.
With something I can't name.

...

"There's where you'll sleep."
She holds out her arm,
Like showing me
A spot vast as the prairie.
Not a hint of privacy-
A dingy corner
Muslin pinned across the ceiling
Stained brown
From rain that seeps through the sod.
I stand straight.
"Thank you, ma'am."

...

She catches my glance at the ceiling,
The sagging cloth already filled with bits of soil.
I drop my chin,
Study my shoes.
"You'll be no wetter than the rest of us," she says. (25-26)

Word Study: Resilience

If anything, May demonstrates her RESILIENCE. Have students write examples of resilience on post-it notes. When completed, put all the post-its on the wall underneath the word “resilience.” Then ask students to put the post-its into categories, seeing if there are any similar answers. Name these categories, having students decide the most fitting names for each. These will be your group’s characteristics of “resilience.”

Before and After:

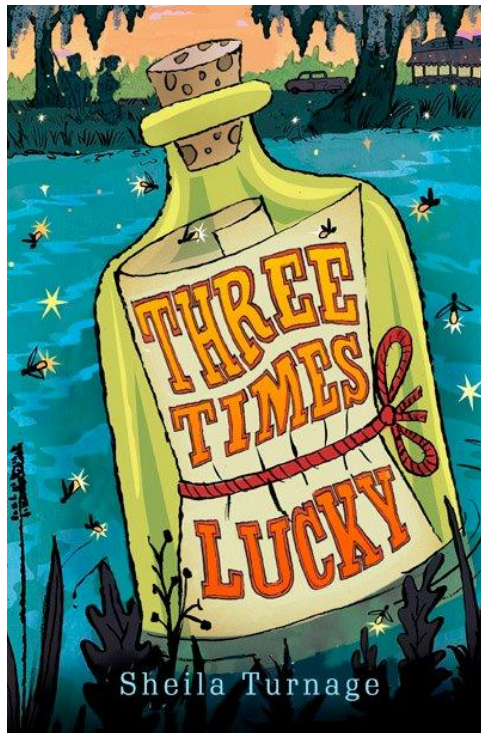
May has a very unique circumstance, and one of the challenges that determines her fate is the time period of the book. As a group, identify some of the challenges May faces (no way to communicate with family, neighbors miles away, no transportation, limited food storage, etc.). Then, look at the list and decide which of these challenges would still affect May if the book took place in modern time. *This can also work into a discussion of different lifestyles and how in many rural communities, some of these challenges might still exist. If you want to create a visual, create a chart with the historical challenge on one side, and on the other side, the modern day solution to this problem, noting if there is no solution.

Prairie Soundscape:

One thing is for sure, May believes in the beauty of the prairie. Alone in the house though, the vastness of the prairie becomes an intimidating place. Have students write down some of the sounds of the prairie, both peaceful and threatening. For instance: grass swaying, wind, dinner bell, cows, horses, river running, wolves, fire crackling, water dripping, creaking of floor boards. Create an orchestrated soundscape, assigning each participant a sound. Conduct the group, building louder and bringing sounds in at different times. Try to play with creating a peaceful prairie as well as a dangerous prairie.

Three Times Lucky

by Sheila Turnage



Daily Special:

The café is a big part of this book, the center and gathering place for this small town. Have students imagine that they were put in charge of the café for a meal. Each student can create their own menu, but they need to be able to cook everything they put on there, for instance, when Mo's in charge she serves a variety of Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwiches and cold soup. Depending on your environment and whether you can have food, think about opening a little café for a day, with each student making one item from their menu. Whether at a school or public library, invite staff/students/patrons to visit the café and sample the Daily Specials!

Map of Your World:

Using the inside of the book cover for inspiration, a rudimentary map of our small town setting, have students create a map of their community. They do not have to include every building, just the ones that hold the most significance for them, that they frequent and that really define their community. Also, students should feel free to get creative with how they represent each landmark; it can absolutely be symbolic or more abstract than a building if wanted.



A Picture Says a Thousand Words:

Miss Lana keeps clippings from Mo's life and the Colonel's life, and since the Colonel suffered severe amnesia, these clippings help us discover in the end, who he really is. Make copies of 3-5 photos from newspapers and distribute these to each student. These pictures don't have to have any relation to one another; they can, but it is not at all necessary. Have them examine the photos for clues and develop a character sketch for a person whose history/life story, somehow relates to all of the pictures. Students should name the person, say where they're from, what they do, and give some interesting facts about their life. Share the sketches and see how different or similar they are.

Message in a Bottle:

Mo constantly writes letters to the person she refers to as “upstream mother.” She sends these messages off into the world in bottles that get floated down rivers. If reading this book over a period of time, begin each session with a brief writing time. Have a bottle/container for each student, and have them write letters to a person, real or imaginary and put the letters in the bottle at the end of writing session. When you have completed reading the book, give students the option of opening their bottle and witnessing their own existence and evolution over time, taking the bottle with them unopened, or sharing the bottle with someone of their choice. This is their bottle, their thoughts, and they can choose what becomes of these thoughts.

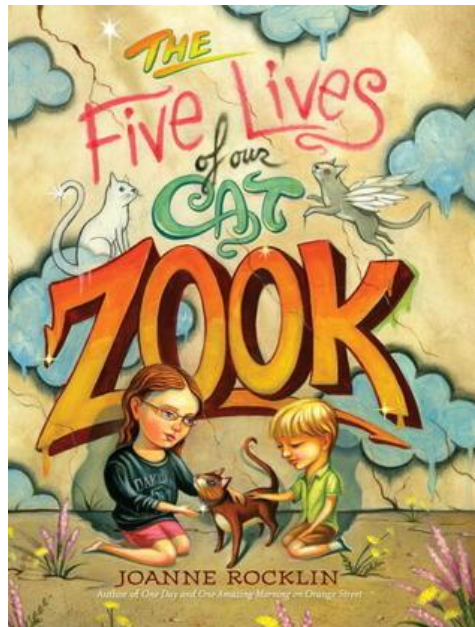
Another option would be, to do some sort of launch activity and track where messages ended up, similarly to Mo’s thumb tack map system. Get a group of vessels, and launch them, with contact information inside. Have students compile responses and track where the vessels were discovered. *I am baffled to figure out an environmentally-friendly way to do this, since bottles are technically littering and launching balloons has environmental consequences too. Hmmmmmm...

Murder Mystery:

This book begs to have a murder mystery event attached to it. Find one appropriate for your age group and encourage costumes and acting the part and clue-discovering fun! Another great, simpler option, is using One-Minute Mysteries, there’s a book and a website: <http://www.oneminutemysteries.com/home.htm>. These are short little mystery tid-bits, that will easily entice your budding detectives.

The Five Lives of our Cat Zook

by Joanne Rocklin



The Great Rebus-Maker:

Definition of REBUS: a representation of words or syllables by pictures of objects or by symbols whose names resemble the intended words or syllables in sound; *also* : a riddle made up of such pictures or symbols (Merriam-Webster)

Oona and Fred use rebuses frequently to communicate. Show students a selection of the rebuses from the book, or a selection of your own rebuses and see if they can figure them out. Then, have them create their own rebuses, passing them to another person to decode their secret meaning.

The Many Lives of Cats

For however many students you have, imagine that's how many lives cats have. Or if you have a particularly large group, split them into smaller groups, ideally 5-9 per group.

Short meetings: if you have a short, or one time meeting, give each participant a piece of paper. Have them write three sentences at the top of the page, first introducing the cat, second, telling of something interesting that happened during the cat's life, and third, explaining how the cat died. They will then pass the sheet to the next person who will do the same thing but continue from where the last cat left off. Once finished, fold over the first story so that only the most recent story is visible. Continue until the paper is filled with cat lives. Read each cat chronology aloud.

Longer Meetings/Classrooms: Have students do the above but in longer form, creating a short story, similar to how Oona crafts her stories. Once the first writer finishes, pass the project on to the next writer, and so on, each writing crafting the next life and incorporating some of the material from the prior story.

The Name Theory:

Oona has something she calls the name theory.

“There is something wonderful and incredible about people’s names. You are given a name when you are born, and some people are even given a name *before* they are born. Your parents know nothing about you...But right away they have to come up with a name for you...The wonderful thing is this: After a while, it becomes clear that your name is the perfect name, the only-name-for-you name.” (48)

Oona: two Os, two eyes, “noticer” (49)

Fred, sometimes Freddy: short, sometimes cute (49)

Oona uses the meaning of names or what they sound like/rhyme with, or even their length or look for the name theory.

Have students apply the name theory to a selection of people in their lives. How can they make sense of their loved ones’ names using Oona’s theory?

Theory of Noticing

Oona’s teacher shares Galileo’s ideas about observation with the class: “[Great thinkers] observe things, but they don’t always observe the same things other people do, especially when others are observing the obvious but wrong things.” (148-149)

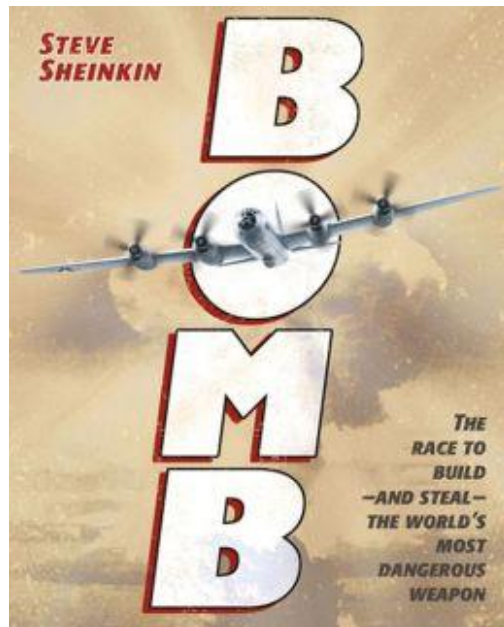
Have each student become a “great thinker” by taking a day to observe in detail and depth, their own world. Encourage them to be creative in their observation, just like Oona’s teacher encourages their creativity. Have students record their observations in a journal, and share one of their more poignant and powerful observations at the next meeting.

The Common-Letter-of-the-Alphabet Theory

So, Oona is all about theories! She comes up with them all the time. This one states that coincidentally, some of the essential character traits/skills a person possesses, can sometimes all start with the same letter. Before explaining the above, have students create a list of qualities they value in themselves, what skills they appreciate and then what they fill their lives with (activities, hobbies, etc). Then, have students go through and see if they can find any of their listings with a common letter. This becomes their power letter!

Bomb: the Race to Build – and Steal – the World’s Most Dangerous Weapon

by Steve Sheinkin



Story Detectives with Multiple Perspectives:

Sheinkin speaks about being a story detective, exploring historical events as a detective would a case. In this text, he provides multiple perspectives on this historical period, allowing his reader to see the conflict in many different ways. This concept can be applied in numerous ways, some more serious than others.

WWII – Have students pick a historical moment from WWII and explore it from several different perspectives. What was Person A’s experience as opposed to Person B and C’s? Broad History – Broaden this process by allowing students to choose any historical moment/event and apply the same multiple perspective lens to it.

Personal Connection – Relate this process to students’ actual daily lives. Have them choose a moment from their own personal history and explore the perspectives beyond their own.

Hindsight is Always 20/20:

After reading the book, have students research what some of the key players felt about the bomb after it was used in Japan and how they felt as the global climate changed in response to this new technology. Did people regret their creation? Did they still feel proud of what they did? What other responses and reflections did these brilliant minds and power players have when able to look back on this extremely controversial invention? As an addition, students could create a visual with poignant before and after quotes paired with an image of either the person or images of the bomb or the bomb’s impact on the world.

Spy Report:

Split your group in half, creating two distinct groups representing an “interested party/country.” Give each group an envelope filled with several pieces of paper, either short documents, images, blueprints, etc. The groups should get a small piece of paper that tells them the final product alluded to in their documents. These inventions can be old and do not have to be dangerous (you could even make it really simple and use a recipe instead of an invention), and the documents should not be super obvious in what they are describing.

Have the group split the documents into 3-4 envelopes (for the rest of the description, we’ll say 3), carefully choosing which documents go together so not too much information is given away. Both groups can choose to withhold one piece of information, that they feel would give away the most obvious clues about their product. They will then pass these envelopes to their opposing team.

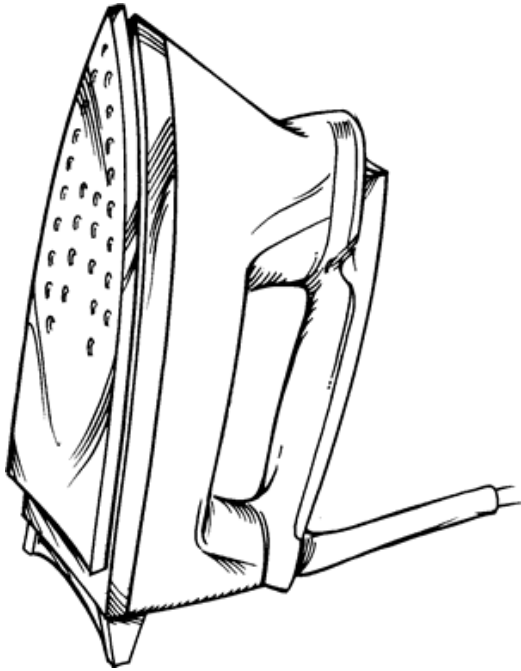
The groups will then split their members so each envelope has a person or small group of people assigned to it. Each envelope will be opened and the “spies” will try to get as much information as they can in a limited time (decide anywhere from 1-3 minutes with the documents, depending on how complicated they are). Have spies take notes on what they see.

At the end of the allotted time, return envelopes to the original groups. Member spies now meet and compare notes, trying to combine their information to discover the product or invention. After they’ve met, have groups prepare a report on what their rival group is building and present it to the class.

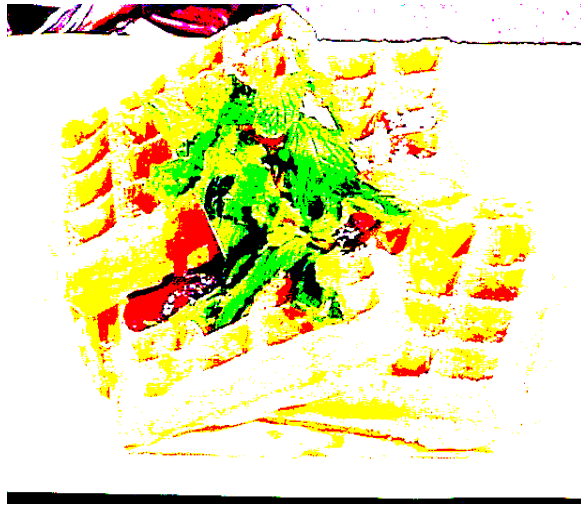
Below, find some silly clues as an example.

1. Yes this recipe does require a few dirty dishes and a little time, but in my book... It's well worth it! YUMMY! They are so light and fluffy!

2. I should have grabbed my Mom's recipe from the farmer's wives in South Dakota but wanted to try something new. I'll stick with the farmer's wives recipe - they never fail.



3.



4.

5. Related Words:

chocolate (6)
cinnamon (6)
cream (7)
egg (39)
family (41)
flour (29)
milk (13)
modifications (33)
sugar (13)
syrup (9)

1. WOW....I did this recipe under 10 minutes. I didn't add the jalapeno. I also replaced the cumin and cayenne. This recipe will be a hit at my bbq this summer!

2.

RW "Rock and Roll Me!"

3.

In a large bowl place [REDACTED] pulp and [REDACTED] juice, toss to coat. Drain, and reserve [REDACTED] have been coated. Using a potato masher [REDACTED] cayenne and mash. Then, fold in the onions [REDACTED] 1 tablespoon of the reserved [REDACTED]. Let sit at room temperature for 1 hour and then serve.



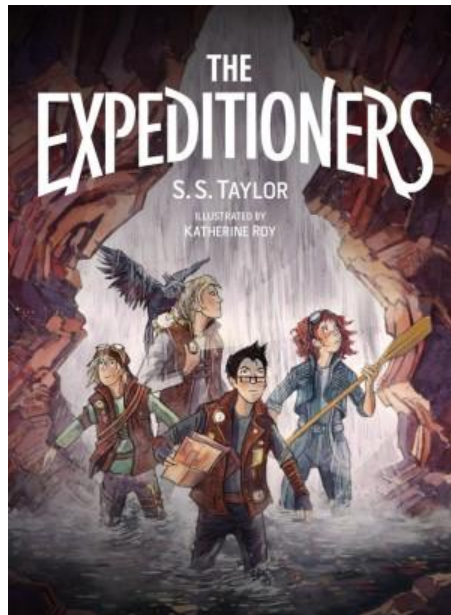
4.



5.

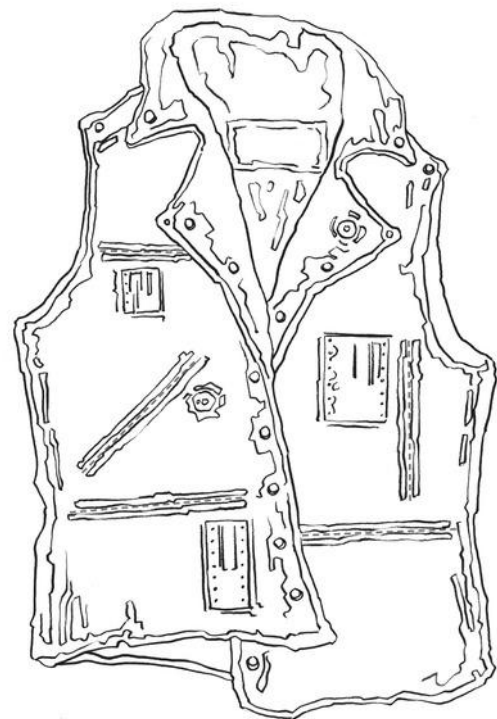
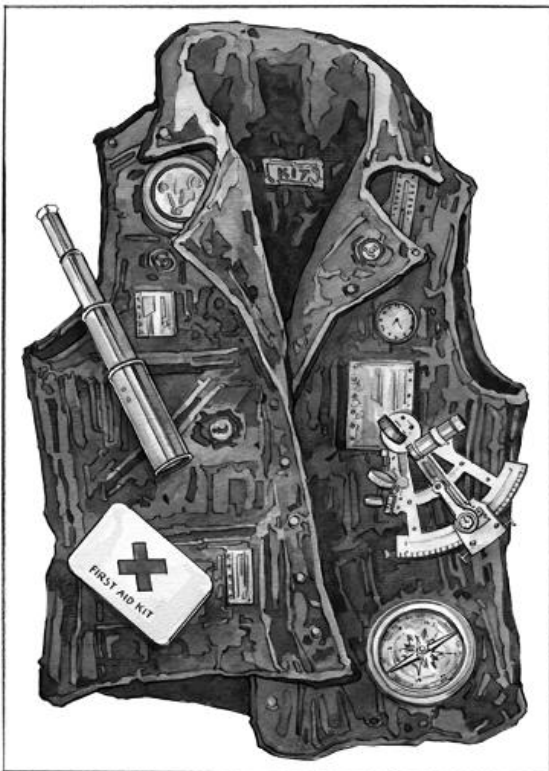
The Expeditioners

by S. S. Taylor



Design Your Own Explorer's Vest

On Sarah's website, she encourages readers to be inspired by her determined your explorers and to create their very own explorer's vest, adding tools, gadgets, and supplies that they feel would suit them best on their own expeditions.



THE EXPEDITIONERS AND THE TREASURE OF DROWNED MAN'S CANYON BY S.S. TAYLOR ILLUSTRATED BY KATHERINE ROY
KATHERINE ROY/ARTIST © 2012 BY S.S. TAYLOR

Above available at: <http://sstaylorbooks.com/DesignYourOwnExplorersVest>

Writing Prompts for Young Explorers

I had the great fortune to see S. S. Taylor speak at Phoenix Books in Burlington. I asked her what writing prompts she would give to young writers who wanted to explore this genre. Here's what she said:

Imagine you've discovered a place? How do you feel? What emotions are inside you? What do you see/feel/smell/etc? Describe that initial feeling as you first walk onto that "newly" discovered land.

Alternately, write from the perspective of a person already present/living on the land that has just been "discovered." How do you feel about this new person or group of people entering what has been your home?

Explore the following concept: Frequently, we do horrific things in the name of discovery.

Art Work Exploration

Katherine Roy adds some great illustrations to this text, bringing life to characters, highlighting small and large moments of tension, conflict, and discovery while combining elements of steampunk, adventure, and mystery. Prior to reading, share a selection of images with readers, and have them create a hypothesis stating what they think the book is about based solely on their impressions of the artwork. At the end of the book, revisit these hypotheses and see how close they were to the actual plot.